

Attached are copies of letter written by Michael Toolen to Maria Foster, who became his wife in December 1862.

One is not surprised to learn that Michael became a successful merchant. The signs are evident in the correspondence; his noting the differences in prices in England and in Cincinnati, his plan to sell the extra trunk, his good taste in selecting the trimming for ladies' bonnets, and the offer to make purchases for the boys and girls in Rushville. The store he opened soon after his return to Rushville prospered. Michael moved into a comfortable home and also built a small brick building. The old-timers say that he would have become a millionaire had he lived. The little old building still stands.

Grandfather Toolen was a leader in the parish and influential in getting the first resident pastor for Rushville. In 1873, he donated property for the first little Catholic cemetery. When this was consecrated the people asked among themselves the natural question: "Who will be the first to be buried here?" This turned out to be Celia, the infant daughter of Michael and Maria. Two weeks later Grandfather Toolen himself died after a baffling illness of two days, and in the spring Maria lost her eldest son, ten-year old James Owen.

It was the books that Michael had brought with him from England that young Jim Geraghty used to borrow when he came to town for Sunday Mass. Was his taste in reading influenced by that of Grandfather Toolen? This seems quite probable.

The good friends in Cincinnati were Anthony Geraghty and his wife. Anthony, the first of Grandpa Geraghty's brothers to come to America, also died at a comparatively early age.

Written by Sister Marion (Nora Geraghty, dau. of James & Norah (Toolen) Geraghty), Convent of Holy Names, Marylhurst, Ore. Jan. 7, 1953, who had these letters of her grandfather Michael Toolen copied from the originals borrowed from her cousin Cecil Toolen in Rushville, Ind.



Gascote Hall Brick Works  
May 12, 1862

My dear Maria,

It is many years now since I heard from you and I am almost in despair of hearing from you this time. Nevertheless I shall write this once more and see what the result may be. May it be more favorable than I dare to hope it will. It is now about six years since you left Ireland, if I remember rightly. You were gone from that country some time before I knew that you had ever left home. Oh! that I had known then; it would have spared me many hours of wretchedness and misery, for I would, if human exertions could accomplish such an event, have prevented you going to America. Since then I have frequently written for your address but never could obtain it until I went home to Ireland a short time ago when I got it from your sister Celia whom I asked repeatedly if you were married but she never would tell me.

Oh! Maria it is your fault that I should have been separated from you so long when from a false delicacy you forbid me writing to you to Ireland because you were afraid of giving the tongue of the slanderer any pretext to exercise its hatefull functions at your expense and alas I foolishly complied with that request, and had I not done so but kept up a regular correspondence with you I would have known of what was taking place and the result would be that in all probability you and I would be living in happiness together. Ah! will this ever come to pass? May God in his goodness to me grant that it may. But I am afraid that the lying tongues of those who ought and who professed to be my friends have done a great deal to bring about the present state of things as existing between you and me. If so may God forgive them for they do not know the amount of injury they have done me.

Maria you cannot be ignorant of the fact that I loved you dearer than any one else in this world. This you know and now I must tell you that that love which I confessed to you in my youth is still the same and under all circumstances and all time will be the same. Such love as mine for you knows no change. It is immutable and if circumstances are such that you can no longer return that love you will at least write to me. This you can do without any impropriety and explain how you are situated. If single do not give up that place which I flatter myself I once held in your affections. If you are married then adieu to all happiness for me on this side the grave.

Remember that these professions are not made by a thoughtless and rash youth but by one whose love has stood the test of ten years and is more intense at the present than it ever was in my youngest days. If you answer this--which I conjure you by the memory of your sainted Mother to do--and if things are as I should wish them to be then I shall suggest a way to you by which we may both be happy yet. Dear Maria I never can nor ever will love a stranger who can have no sympathy with me or whom I cannot have any sympathy with. I have never been out of employment one single hour since I came to this country. I have been most fortunate in this respect. I am now engaged for two years at a good salary but nothing will prevent me from seeing you if the answer to this be as I dare hope it will. My brother John was here



with me about three weeks ago and staid with me a fortnight. He gives a sad account of G . About the people being all dispersed, scarcely any of the old inhabitants to be seen there and children who were scarcely able to walk when I left home are now married. This sounds so strange to me as I always think of people and things as I left them. Dear Maria in conclusion I must again beg the answer to this and if you are married may you be happy shall be my constant prayer.

Your affectionate friend,

Michael Toolen

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July 21, 1862

My dear Maria,

Your letter has just been handed to me and to say that I received it with pleasure would convey but a very faint idea indeed of what I feel and I am sure I am so excited that I shall say, I fear, something that will make you think me nothing but an old goose. I am glad that you have written yourself. You ask me to excuse your writing. Why it is beautiful and I would rather have it as it is now than if every letter was of diamond on a golden tablet, because I feel that it contains your own simple and unaffected expressions of love and kindness to me, and this I could not depend on if another had written for you. Maria I must congratulate you on your very nice style of composition. It is long since I have read anything so beautiful. Who could write anything that could give me so much pleasure as you have in the following three sentences-- "I have always loved you. I shall never love any but you, and I have been continually thinking of you." I shall never love any but you, I can depend on these being your own sentiments, they have been committed to paper by your own pen and I have sufficient faith in you to think that they are the outpourings of your own heart. May I never find out that I am mistaken and may you always be true, as I hope you will, to these expressions that have given me so much unbounded joy.

Dear Maria for the last four or five years I have never been so happy as at this moment. During all this I have been hoping, fearing, and doubting about you but thank God, all is now cleared up and my patience is rewarded more than I ever dared to expect it would be. Truly the ways of Providence are unsearchable. Who could have thought for the last years that you and I should ever see each other again? as we now have every reason to hope and when this comes to pass! Ah! how I anticipate the sweet delight that must follow our meeting, never to part again in this world, to continue forever to share in each other's joys and sorrows, to talk over the past, of the many pleasant winter nights we spent together with our young friends in the dear old land, of the many little adventures that each have gone through since our separation. Dearest Maria who ever could marry a stranger? Not I. No stranger could ever understand me. How could I talk to her of the past? and how could a strange woman sympathise with me? Ah no! Such a thought would be worse than death to me.

Dear Maria you ask me if I can make up my mind to leave this place to go to you? I do not hesitate to answer this question and most emphatically say that I can, that I could leave any place to go and live with you. Populous England



has been a desert to me. I have mixed little with society ever since I came here though from my position here there has been a great temptation for me to do so, but as I have before stated, I never lost a hope of seeing you again some day and this thought has been my guiding star. I think I told you in my last that I had been at home in Ireland about a year since. I never shall forget what a friend there told me about you. Ah Maria, you ought to have written to me when you were in trouble, and should not I only be too happy to smoothen all your difficulties. When I heard, dear Maria, that an awkward looking country fellow wanted you to marry him, and that your poor Father was willing to give him everything he himself had got to depend on for the future sooner than see you go to a strange land, where perhaps he should never see you again in this world. I say when I heard this my heart was filled to bursting with indignation at the thought of your becoming the partner for ever of such a fellow. But dear Maria when I was told of the choice you made under such trying circumstances, divided as you must be between your love for your poor Father and the dislike to become the mate of this man, I could scarcely refrain from falling down on my knees to bless you. Yes I thought I must drop on my knees and nothing less.

Dear Maria if I had not had a little experience myself in those matters I should be surprised how you managed to free yourself from all your Sisters. I am not ignorant of the scene at Jas. Kearns' on the night of your leaving home and I am also aware with what zeal a friend has pressed his suit in America. Again I must ask why you never wrote to me on these occasions? Surely my sympathy would have been worth something.

Now dear Maria I want to ask you if there is plenty of work out there and if I can be able to keep you respectably with my labour or could a few pounds be turned to any advantage so that one could do something without working at day labour. I do not fear this though I know it will be very strange to me for a time but you are aware I have been used to work when at home, and consequently I know I shall not feel it like one that never had done any. I should wish for you to come here but I could not think of asking you to leave your brother and sister. Does Annie live with you and Michael? I would much rather you had been living out, for I should like you to learn a different style of housekeeping to that practised in Ireland. Something more than to know how to boil the praties and sweep the house up. Of course Annie is a big girl, in this country they would call her a strapping wench. Ask her if she remembers "phullen Dugnan." You can tell her that I am not a bit like him now,

Dear Maria I want to ask you if I may tell your Father that I have heard from you. I think he would be glad to know that I have, and that you have intrusted your happiness to my keeping. Of course I shall not do so till I hear from you. Did I tell you in my last that I was carrying on a business in a small way on my own account? I have had a brick yard where we make bricks for building but because of the war in your country I have been obliged to give it up. I have got a small quantity of brick unsold, but I hope they will be sold before I hear from you again. I can leave my present situation at a month's notice, when, if you wish, I shall at once, that is when I hear from you, leave here for your place. You must send me directions what route to take.

How did you get my letter without any one knowing of it? Let me know if any one knows about it and remember your promise to "let me know everything in your next." I shall only give you 3 days from the time you get this till you post to me again, and mind the example I have set you in writing me a long one.



Please tell me if any of Thas. Burns family are in that part of the country and how they are doing. I shppose they are all married. You and I are the only two left of our crowd tha t are not married. I hope we shall not be long an exception to the rule.

When my brother John was over here he staid with me a fortnight. I told him then of my determination to write to you. I know he would be glad to know that I heard from you but your wish shall be sacred to me. I shall tell no one of your letter without your consent. Dear Maria I don't think you would know me if you were to see me. I have grown much stouter and wear whiskers and moustache enough to stuff a pillow with. I know I shall very much surprise you when you see me. Should you wish before you have read all this that I had not written so much? Well, you will never tire me with reading yours.

Well, I shall wish you goodbye for the present and I hope soon to hear from you again.

Yours true till death,

M. Toolen

Kind I am to have all particulars  
in your next.

October 2, 1862

My dear Maria,

I never wrote a letter more against my will than this. I received yours on Monday last and have been in hopes ever since that I would be able to leave here immediately. I have not been able to see the gentleman that I am doing business for since I got your letter till today. He was furious when I talked of leaving him, and he now insists on me giving him a months notice from the next pay-day which is a fortnight from now. I must tell you that t.is is a most bitter disappointment to me and I fear that it will be to you also and yet I cannot be sorry that you shall feel it as then I may think that you are wishing for me to be with you as sincerely as I am myself. Dearest be sure that I shall not wait one moment more than is necessary. Perhaps I may get off sooner than I expect. My master may not, after a few days, insist on so long a notice. But I may tell you that the law is with him if he thinks proper to do so. I do not blame him much for he knows that it is very difficult to meet with one that he can place confidence in for the situation which I hold. This country is so very wicked that it is rare to meet with a trustworthy person.

Dear Maria it was cruel of you to hint a doubt of my constancy to you and I beg once more to assure you that nothing this side the grave can end my fervent and pure love for you and all I ask in return is that you love me with the same sincerity and never again let a doubtfull thought enter your mind concerning me. Ah! I would not doubt you for a whole world. I should never be happy again if ever you were to give me cause for doubting. No, welcome death sooner than such a thought.

Dear Maria I know my poor Mother will feel my going away but am I not the same here as if in America? I am lost to her for ever whether I stay or go and as she knows this is so, I feel sure that in time when she comes to know that I have given my happiness into your keeping I am certain she will be pleased. I do not



I do not know the sort of shawl that you want but I shall try and get one. There has not been any of these things such as you want worn here for years. What shawls are worn are black. I want you to tell me what sort of dress you should like from here and what sort of cloth I should buy for my own clothes. I do not know what I shall do about an overcoat. I am wanting one but I think of waiting to have it made in America. Yet I do not think there can be much difference in the style in either of the countries but I must ask you to advise me in all these little things. You must not make many shirts for me as I have got a stack of these things that will last me for years. You will have plenty of little things to do that will fill up your spare time untill I go out. There is one thing that I must tell you and that is that I shall want to be married before I am many hours in Rushville and I shall also want some employment directly after I get there. Could you not come to me to the next town to Rushville and get married before I went there at all? You could come in the morning and I could go back with you the same day. You must write to me the day you get this as I fear that I shall not be able to go till I may have an answer.

Yours now and for ever,

Michael Toolen

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October 3, 1862

Dear Maria,

I have seen my employer today and have come to a final arrangement with him. I shall have to continue in his service till the 8th of November, with diligence I shall have the answer of this from you within a day or two of that time. When I shall have nothing to wait for only to execute your little commissions. Do not forget to let me know about your dress, what sort it should be and the sort of cloth for my own suit. The day after I get yours I shall be on the road for your place. So do not delay an hour. When I get to you I shall be a good lad and try to make out by my attention to you for this little disappointment. I shall take about eighty pounds with me. Can I have it exchanged in Rushville? or should I exchange it in New York? I have one very good trunk that I had made in Birmingham but I have got a great many books and thought that I might take these in any sort of a box, but if you think a trunk say so and I shall buy a trunk to take them in. If there are any other little things that you think I should take with me from here do not hesitate in letting me know. It will not be any trouble and if there is anything that could be bought cheaper here it would be right for me to take it out with me. If you have not got a black silk dress I should like to bring you one but if you have one of this sort you may rely on my taste in choosing a coloured dress. What shall I bring Annie? You must tell me this. I shall be waiting for your letter.

Yours ever and yours alone,

Michael Toolen

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Sweeney's Hotel  
Cor. Chambers and Chatham St.  
New York.

December 14, 1862

My dear M.

Here I am after a stormy passage of 16 days across the Atlantic. I shall leave here on the express this evening for Cambridge where I shall hope to meet you. Do not forget this. I think I have earned this much for I question if ever knight, even in the ancient days of chivalry, has done more to prove his devotion to his Lady love than what I have done. If I can find Bernard Leonard's house, I shall go there but if not I shall be at the principal hotel so that Mr. Leonard will soon be able to find me. Now pray let no false modesty prevent you coming. If you fail I shall certainly come to the conclusion that you have brought me out here under false pretences. I have been staying here ever since Friday evening. I found that I could not get to Rushville without having to stop Sunday on the road and so I considered it better to stay here till this evening when I can go right through without stopping.

I must tell you that I have not seen any nice girls in this city. I hope that the country will be able to show some prettier ones. Remember--Wednesday morning I shall expect you. Get to Cambridge on Tuesday night. No person at Rushville need know what you are going to Cambridge for and if they should I cannot for the life of me see how that should influence you. So remember and come Wednesday.

Yours ever,

M. T.

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Carr House  
Rushville  
December 17, 1862

Dear M.

I am staying at this place but I shall walk up toward your house and try to get this conveyed to you. I shall then wait for you in the street or come to me here. I feel dreadful lonesome. Do come and dont wait to be particular about your dress. Put the quilt about you and put shoes on your feet as the ground is cold. Oh! I cannot joke, I feel so lost in this place.

Yours

M. Toolen

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Cincinnati, Ohio  
January 8, 1863

My dear Maria,

If I had not promised you that I should write I should not do so for some time, at least for a few days. I took down my writing case last night but felt so down that I feared I should write something in the mood in which I was in that would give you pain. I am sorry that I must say that I am not at all favorably impressed with the city, but perhaps I may, in time become accustomed to those things that seem so very disgusting now. I had to wait 5 hours at Shelbyville for the train from Indiana. This made it late before I got here, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  o'clock. No bed so I lay wrapped up in my coat till morning. For this and my breakfast they asked 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  dollar. I gave him a 3 dollar bill and in giving my change he returned 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  dollars and I never told him of his mistake, for I considered that his charge was most extortionate.

I seen W. Laughton's nephew yesterday morning, and he was very kind. He invited me to stop at his house till I got a situation and at the same time he would be continually on the lookout for me. I, of course, refused to stay at his house but promised to call everyday to see what what he might make out for my advantage. I have seen Mr. and Mrs. Geraghty and they treated me in the kindest way possible. Mrs. G. would have me stay for dinner and G. Walked with me about town all afternoon. She never got your letter till late last night and you know you told her to look after me and acting up to your instructions, she was after me pretty soon this morning. I asked her what was the matter and she said that she received your letter and that you asked her to take care of me, "and she would." They both went to a ball last night. They asked me to go with them, but of course I felt too low in spirits to do anything of the kind.

I have not heard, as yet, of anything to do that would suit me but Mr. Duffy and his friend say that if nothing better offers I can have a job in the depot with them. The work here is rather hard but I shall not care about this (if I can get it). It will suit me till something better turns up.

Everything here is very dear. Wood is now from 6 to 7 dollars a cord, and house rent is equally dear. Mrs. Geraghty's sister is paying 5 dollars a month for two rooms that are scarcely fit to live in. I am much afraid of bringing you here, when I see what the little village of Rushville has done to you. I fear what the dirty, foetid air of this city may do for you. Just fancy me looking at you penned up here, looking ill and sad!!! The very thought would kill me. And then again, when I think of the healthy, rosy hue that the country would naturally give you cheeks, the contrast makes me feel uneasy. Oh! I only wish that I could get something to do in the country. I will write to you again when I am employed, if employed at all, and if not you may expect me in Rushville next week.

I have been speaking to Mrs. Geraghty about Annie and she thinks that you had better leave her in Rushville till you get settled here. I have thought much about her this last day or two. I wish you never let her go to a party, and if you come here without her, as I fear you must do, you must get her to promise before her Mrs. that she will not go to any parties till she comes out here, nor to keep company at all. She could stay sometimes with Biddy Burnes so long as Biddy staid in her own house but on any account I would not allow her to run



about. You may think that I am out of place in saying so much about Annie as I have done but I must tell you that if I was never married to you I feel that she is entitled to my care and advice as far as possible. In fact the same thing that made me fond of you makes me take an interest in Annie--the loss of a good Mother. I have often wondered, though I have said nothing about it till now, that Michael allowed her ever to go to a party at all. I will just ask him this question, does he not despise, or would he have any girl for his wife that goes to parties? I can answer this question for him, I feel sure that he would not, well then in the name of all that is good, let us not hear of her going to any more parties while she stays there, and if you come here as soon as we get settled we shall have her come out and stay with us till she can get a place that we know will suit her.

But do not say to any person that I am going to stay here for fear that I might be disappointed but at the same time hold yourself in readiness to come at a moment's notice. Have everything packed and ready to turn out. I hope that Michael will come with you. He could say in Rushville that he was only coming to see you safe here, then if he got a job here he could stay with us. Surely now that we are so far from home, and so few, we ought not to be separated if possible. I hope that he will take this into consideration, and wishing this I must bid you good by for the present.

Your affectionate

Husband.

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174 East Pearl St.  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
January 14, 1863

My dear Maria,

Your letters have made me very happy this morning. I am sorry to have to tell you that I have not done any good since I came here, nor do I see any prospect of doing any. There is not an Irishman nor Englishman in town of any influence that I have not solicited and all to no purpose. There is only one hope remaining for me now, and this I have not much faith in. Mrs. Ceraughty went with me to Father Edward Purcell, the Bishop's brother. He told me to call and see him in a day or two. I shall do so today but I fear it will not be much use. I am willing to labour at anything, but from appearance employers think I am not. I have shaved all my beard off and tried to make myself look as much like a working man as possible. Still no use. I think I told you that there is a priest in Rochester that I knew in England. I have a good mind to go from here to that place and if not successful there to go on to Canada. I should like for you to go with me. Can I think of subjecting you to the hardship of traveling in this severe season of the year? Do you think I had better leave from here or go to Rushville before I go? If you post on Friday morning I shall have your letter on Sunday at latest. I shall wait here till then.

I am afraid, dear Maria, that I was too selfish in inviting you to become my partner. My passionate love prevented me from studying your interest properly. Many a time this week have I reproached myself for this. I ought, if I only had common sense seen my way clear to support you comfortable before doing what I have done. I am fully conscious of what a wretch I am, the selfish cause of making you miserable at a time that should be the happiest of your life, but I



but I must trust to your generous nature to forgive me and let us both hope that a brighter side may before long present itself. I know that it is sinfull to feel so despairingly, and take such a dark view of things as I do, but really I cannot help it. It is entirely on your account that I do so. I so much fear that you may have to undergo hardships that you have not been used to, and on my account too!--that would sacrifice every happiness for your sake.

If you wish me to go back to Rushville before I leave here for the places I have mentioned I should like for you to tell me what I must bring to Mrs. Eurns. Dresses are very expensive. If I bring you and Annie your bonnets they must be green or p coloured for there are no white bonnets nor any light coloured ones at all that you would like. If you like two of these I shall endeavor to get them as nicely trimmed as I possibly can. If I buy all these things I shall have to buy a trunk to put them in. Do you think it could be sold to any of the boys or girls in Rushville? You ought to ask the girls if they want anything and say what a good opportunity it would be for them to get one. In fact if any of them are wanting anything from here you may say that I shall be glad to bring it to them. Certainly everything here is much cheaper than at Rushville with the exception of house rent, firing, and provisions. Now do not delay in answering this as you did the last one. If you knew what a relief it has been to me to hear from you, you would not delay a minute. At all events remember I do not stop here longer than Monday. If I can get no work, and I fear I shant, I shall want your letter before then or not at all. Mind it wont reach me if it dont come before that. I am glad that Michael stays much with you and the girls too. Remember me to Mr. and Mrs. Lagan and Amy Feely.

Write in a minute and answer all questions and please your loving and affectionate

Husband

M. Toolen

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Cincinnati, Ohio  
January 23, 1863

My dear M.

Three more mornings and never a letter from you yet, this is too bad. I am fearing that there is something the matter with you, or that some of you must be ill at Rushville. Be sure I would not stop here so long were it not that I am promised from day to day that something will turn up in my favour and too, I do not wish to leave as long as there is a hope remaining. There is only one thing that I regret and that is that I did not take you along with me. I wish with all my heart that you were here at this moment, however inconvenient it would be for you.

I go to see Father Edward Purcell every day. I have seen him this morning and have got to see him tomorrow again. If it were not for that I would go home in the morning and be with you on Sunday. I have never spent a time so wretched in all my life. What with being away from you and alone here, and not being able to succeed in my expectations. I never have been tried so before and I hope never shall again. I do not often go to see Mrs. Geraghty, not more than about twice a week.



Only think, to be so near you for a whole 3 weeks and not be able to see you. There is only one train leaves here for Rushville every day, and leaves at 5 o'clock in the morning, so that I shall not be able to see you to-morrow night after seeing Father Edward, and I am afraid after all my waiting that he will not be able to do anything for me. Is not this desheartening? Did any two persons ever spend such a honey-moon as you and I have spent? But we will make out for all this when we meet which I trust we shall be able to do before long.

I shall write to-morrow morning if I am not to go home on Monday. I shall certainly know in the morning what my prospects here will be. The two bonnets that I have looked out for you and Annie will cost 12 dollars each. They are both white--uncut velvet, nicely trimmed, that is according to my ideas. Perhaps my letter to-morrow will be for you to come here, if so you be ready to leave home as soon as ever you get it. That, or I shall be home with you on Monday. Feathers are worth 40 cents per lb. here, do not mind buying any till you come here if you are to come at all.

Your disconsolate Husband

Michael

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Cincinnati, Ohio  
March 23, 1863

My dear friend Toolen,

I received your letter of the 13th inst. I am happy you are all well also that business has improved since I left. I have had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Abercrombie down here last week. I would have gone back with him but work with him was not very busy therefore I concluded to stay a few weeks longer. There was a fine turn of the Catholic associations here on Patrick's day. Tell Mr. McL. that I am ten thousand times obliged to him for his kindness to have me exempt from the conscription. Tell him at the same time that I feel no way put about because of that affair neither would I have any man think that it was on that account I left Rushville.

On receipt of your letter I went and ordered those brooms. They are the cheapest that can be procured in this city. They have raised considerably since you were down here. I forgot too, to tell you the tea I sent you has raised from what you paid for it to what I had to pay. I have seen your letter to Minor and Andrews telling them to correct the mistake which was in fact (at least they told me so) a rise in the tea. However Minor said they would make it all satisfactory.

Give my respects to all inquiring friends and acquaintances and my wishes to Maria and Annie.

Yours truly

A. Losty